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8 April 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Highlights of 8 April Meeting of "Indo China
Steering Group"

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1. [REDACTED] reported on the loss of Ban Na. The out-post had been occupied [REDACTED] primarily because the time has long since passed when Vang Pao could entice his Meos to hold real estate west of the PDJ.

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[REDACTED] have been posted to Ban Na for a year's tour. The tour was recently upped and they were extended an additional 60 days. This and the constant enemy pressure had sapped the morale. Medevac support was limited in part because of [REDACTED] and the garrison merely walked out. There was no major opposition.

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There are two [REDACTED] battallions northwest of Ban Na. We do not know their status at this point. [REDACTED] noted the DDCI's unhappiness--going back to his recent trip to Laos--about the efforts to hold such strong points which he considers merely to be lucrative targets for NVN identification, isolation and capture.

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2. [REDACTED] what the NVA would likely do next in this area. [REDACTED] with general agreement from [REDACTED] replied that this depended upon how much supplies had been stockpiled in the area and on the weather. If everything is okay, the enemy could move to invest Long Tien within the next three weeks or so.

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3. [REDACTED] noted that in the hubbub elsewhere in Laos recently, it is not generally well known that virtually all of the Bolovens plateau has been lost. There really, [REDACTED] is nothing to stop the enemy now north of Pakse.

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4. [REDACTED] noted signs of recent conflict between Pathet Lao and NVN forces. Some PL troops are attempting to defect.

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5. (SENSITIVE) There was a brief description of current bureaucratic arrangements for dealing with the Agency view that the Laos para-military programs have exceeded Agency capabilities. Growing out of a recent San Clemente meeting, a committee looking at alternatives to CIA control is being chaired by the JCS. There are five subcommittees dealing with Command & Control, Logistics, Air Support, Training, and Budget & Fiscal. Another committee under Sullivan of State has been set up to do a contingency study concerning the future in Laos. It appears that the reports at least from the first committee are to be made to the Secretary of Defense who is not at all convinced that the domestic political situation will permit any long term involvement in Laos. If this view holds, a show-down between SecDef and White House authorities is looming. (SENSITIVE).

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6. [REDACTED] reported that the CIA paper on logistics in the wake of [REDACTED] was well received in town. The DIA has its own estimate but has not described its methodology. The SRG will meet next week to discuss the subject.

7. There was a brief discussion of the loss of infiltration data. The only real way to fill in the breach is to put a device directly across an existing land line. This requires a long term power source. The only feasible such source would be nuclear and it was generally agreed that political aspects would hardly permit approval of introduction of nuclear powered batteries in Southeast Asia.

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8. [REDACTED] noted that he had asked [REDACTED] to do a paper (which the DCI might disseminate at a high level informally) on what decisions Hanoi is likely to be making in the near term.

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Deputy Director of Current Intelligence
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